

# Korean dialects

A number of **Korean dialects** are spoken on the Korean Peninsula. The peninsula is extremely mountainous and each dialect's "territory" corresponds closely to the natural boundaries between different geographical regions of Korea. Most of the dialects are named for one of the traditional Eight Provinces of Korea. One is sufficiently distinct from the others to be considered a separate language, the Jeju language.

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## The standard language

- In South Korea, Standard Korean (표준어/標準語/pyojun-eo) is defined by the National Institute of the Korean Language as "the modern speech of Seoul widely used by the well-cultivated" (교양있는 사람들이 두루 쓰는 현대 서울 말). In practice, it tends not to include features that are found exclusively in Seoul.
- In North Korea, the adopting proclamation stated that the Pyongan dialect spoken in the capital of Pyongyang and its surroundings should be the basis for the North Korean standard language (*Munhwaŏ*); however, in practice, it remains "firmly rooted" in the Gyeonggi dialect, which had been the national standard for centuries.<sup>[3]</sup>

Despite North–South differences in the Korean language, the two standards are still broadly intelligible. One notable feature within the divergence is the North's lack of anglicisms and other foreign borrowings due to isolationism and self-reliance—pure/invented Korean words are used in replacement.<sup>[4]</sup>

## Regional dialects

Korean	
<b>Native speakers</b>	76 million (2007) <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>Language family</b>	Koreanic <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ <b>Korean</b></li></ul>
<b>Dialects</b>	Hamgyŏng (NE) <div>Pyŏngan (NW)</div> <div>Hwanghae</div> <div>Central (includes Gyeonggi, Chungcheong and others)</div> <div>Yeongdong</div> <div>Gyeongsang (SE)</div> <div>Jeolla (SW)</div> <div>Jeju language (classified as a separate language by some authorities)</div> <div>Yukchin (classified as a separate language by some authorities)</div>
Language codes	
<b>ISO 639-1</b>	ko ( <span>https://www.loc.gov/standards/iso639-2/php/langcodes_name.php?iso_639_1=ko</span> )
<b>ISO 639-2</b>	kor ( <span>https://www.loc.gov/standards/iso639-2/php/langcodes_name.php?code_ID=242</span> )
<b>ISO 639-3</b>	kor

Korea is a mountainous country, and Korean is consequently divided into numerous small local dialects. There are few clear demarcations, so dialect classification is necessarily to some extent arbitrary. Nonetheless, the following divisions are commonly cited in the literature:

**Glottolog**

kore1280 (<http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/kore1280>)<sup>[2]</sup>



Korean dialects in Korea and neighbouring areas



Various words for "dragonfly"  
(Standard Korean of South Korea: 잠자리).

## ■ Northeastern dialects

- Hamgyŏng dialect, also called *Northeastern dialects*. Spoken in the Hamgyong Province (Kwanbuk and Kwannam) region, the northeast corner of Pyongan Province, and the Ryanggang Province of North Korea as well as the Jilin, Heilongjiang of Northeast China; Russia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan of former Soviet Union. Nine vowels: the eight of the standard language plus ö.
- Ryukchin dialect (Yukchin): Spoken in the historical Yukchin region which is located in the northern part of North Hamgyong Province, far removed from P'yŏng'an, but has more in common with P'yŏng'an dialects than with the surrounding Hamgyŏng dialects.<sup>[3]</sup> Since it has been isolated from the major changes of Korean language, it has preserved distinct features of Middle Korean. It is the only known tonal Korean language.<sup>[5]</sup>

## ■ Northwestern dialects

- Pyongan dialect: spoken in Pyongyang, Pyongan Province, Chagang Province, and neighboring Liaoning, of China. The basis of the standard language for North Korea.

## ■ Central dialects.<sup>[3]</sup> Commonly divided along provincial boundaries:

- Gyeonggi dialect, also called the "Seoul dialect": spoken in the Gyeonggi Province, Seoul and Incheon cities, as well as southeastern Kaesong (North Korea). The basis of the standard language for South Korea.
- Chungcheong dialects: spoken in the Chungcheong Province (Hoseo) region of South Korea, including the city of Daejeon.
- Yeongseo dialects: spoken in Yeongseo, Gangwon Province (South Korea) and neighbouring Kangwon Province (North Korea) to the west of the Taebaek Mountains. Yeongseo is quite distinct from the Yeongdong dialects to the east of the mountains.
- Yeongdong dialects: spoken in Yeongdong, Gangwon Province (South Korea) and neighbouring Kangwon Province (North Korea) to the east of the Taebaek Mountains. Yeongdong is quite distinct from the Central Korean dialects to the west of the mountains.<sup>[3]</sup>
- Hwanghae dialect: spoken in Hwanghae Province of North Korea. Commonly included among the Central dialects, but some researchers argue that it does not fit there comfortably.<sup>[3]</sup>

- Gyeongsang dialects, also called *Southeastern dialects*: spoken in Gyeongsang Province (Yeongnam) of South Korea, including the cities of Busan, Daegu and Ulsan. This dialect is easily distinguished from the Seoul dialect because its pitch is more varied. Six vowels, *i*, *e*, *a*, *eo*, *o*, *u*.
- Jeolla dialect, also called *Southwestern dialects*: spoken in the Jeolla Province (Honam) region of South Korea, including the city of Gwangju. Ten vowels: *i*, *e*, *ae*, *a*, *ü*, *ö*, *u*, *o*, *eu*, *eo*.
- Jeju language is spoken on Jeju off the southwest coast of South Korea and is sometimes considered a separate Koreanic language.<sup>[6]</sup> The nine vowels of Middle Korean, including *arae-a* (ㅏ). May have additional consonants as well.

A recent statistical analysis of these dialects suggests that the hierarchical structure within these dialects are highly uncertain, meaning that there is no quantitative evidence to support a family-tree-like relationship among them.<sup>[7]</sup>

## Outside of the Korean peninsula

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- Koryo-mar (Autonym: *Kopë map*/고려말, Standard Korean: 중앙아시아 한국어), usually identified as a descendant of the Hamgyŏng dialect, is spoken by the Koryo-saram, ethnic Koreans in the post-Soviet states of Russia and Central Asia. It consists of a Korean base vocabulary, but takes many loanwords and calques from Russian language. It is mostly based on Hamgyong and Ryukchin dialect, since Koryo-saram people are mainly from the northern part of Hamgyong region.
- Zainichi Korean language (재일어; 재일조선어) is a language or a dialect spoken among Koreans in Japan, strongly influenced by Japanese.
- Korean language in China (중국조선어) As discussed above, Koreans in China use a dialect nearly identical to Hamgyŏng dialect in North Korea, but there are still some differences, as the former has relatively more loanwords from modern Chinese.

## Classification

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- Korean
  - Western
    - Northwestern
      - Pyongan dialect
    - Central
      - Gyeonggi dialect (the basis of the standard Korean)
      - Hwanghae dialect
      - Gangwon dialect
      - Chungcheong dialect
    - Southwestern
      - Jeolla dialect
      - Jeju language
  - Eastern
    - Northeastern
      - Hamgyŏng dialect

- Ryukjin dialect
- Southeastern
  - Gyeongsang dialect
  - Yeongdong dialect

Some researchers classify the Korean dialects in Western and Eastern dialects. Compared with Middle Korean, the Western dialects have preserved long vowels, while the Eastern dialects have preserved tones or pitch accent.<sup>[8]</sup> The Jeju language and some dialects in North Korean make no distinction between vowel length or tone.<sup>[8]</sup> But the Southeastern dialect and the Northeastern dialect may not be closely related to each other genealogically.

## See also

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- Koreanic languages
- Regions of Korea

## References

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6. Janhunen, Juha (1996). *Manchuria: An Ethnic History* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=vfJiAAAAMAAJ>). Finno-Ugrian Society. ISBN 978-951-9403-84-7.
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## Further reading

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- Kim, Mu-rim (김무림) (2004). *국어의 역사* (*Gugeo-ui yeoksa, History of the Korean language*). Seoul: Hankook Munhwasa. ISBN 89-5726-185-0.

## External links

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- [国立国会図書館デジタルコレクション - 朝鮮語方言の研究. 上巻](http://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/1869828) (<http://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/1869828>)[下巻](http://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/1869845) (<http://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/1869845>) Korean dialect word differences
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